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COUNTRY East Germany

SUBJECT Construction of the Berlin Canal

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SOURCE

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1. The construction of the Berlin Canal (Berlinskiy Obvodnyy Kanal - Berlin Bypassing Canal) was begun in the spring of 1951 by ISU #23. The canal construction was under the direct command of Engineer Colonel (fnu) Kirik, who was subordinate to Colonel A.P. Siryuk, chief of ISU #23. The headquarters of this project were located in Schoenwald near Berlin.

2. The canal was to be finished on 1 May 1952. [REDACTED] Kirik had conceded that it was impossible to finish the Berlin Canal by May 1952. Officers of ISU #23 heard rumors to the effect that the canal would not be finished before the end of 1953.

3. At a meeting [REDACTED] Sokolov (fnu), Russian civilian chief of the Planning Section, state that two million rubles were needed for canal construction in 1951. It was announced for publicity purposes that the canal was for the use of the German Democratic Republic, but in reality it was constructed for strategic purposes by the GOFG. [REDACTED] the

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canal was being built in order to bypass the western sectors of Berlin and that the German Democratic Republic neither needed nor wanted the canal.

- 25X1 4. [] ISU #23 financed the canal construction expenses (materials and payroll). Ten Russian officers, about 10 EM, 30 Russian male and female civilians, and one thousand male and female Germans were working on the canal project. The average pay of the German workers was 250 to 300 east marks per month.
- 25X1 5. Colonel Kirik, chief of the Berlin Canal Construction, sat all day in his office instead of checking the actual work and the progress made. Colonel Siryuk, chief of ISU #23, protected Kirik by laying the blame for the slow progress on sabotage by the Germans, on obsolete equipment, and on the lack of equipment. []
- 25X1 [] the management of the construction of the Berlin Canal was inefficient, starting with Colonel Kirik and going down the line of Soviet engineers and officers, all of whom had no incentive or interest in their work.
6. A penal battalion was sent from the USSR in 1950 to help with the canal construction, but when not enough work was done by this battalion, other Soviet engineering troops were brought in to help in the construction of the canal. These latter engineering troops performed no manual labor, but learned the methods of excavating and dredging and how to use cement mixing machinery. These troops left in 1951, and only 10 Russian enlisted men, assigned as guards and drivers, remained behind.
7. Captain (fnu) Kovbasa was the chief mechanic in charge of all equipment used on the canal construction. A German engineer named (fnu) Fisher was his deputy. Besides the officers, there were Soviet and German civilian engineers employed on the construction. The chief of the Planning Section, which controlled the expenses and schedule of canal construction, was Nikolay Ivanovich Sokolov, born about 1907, about 45 years old and a member of the Communist Party. He was 5'5" tall, weighed 70 kg, had sparse blond hair, a round face, a small turned up nose, thin mouth, and watery blue eyes. He wore yellow shoes, a dark blue suit with white stripes, a dark blue hat and a blue overcoat. Sokolov arrived in Germany in July 1951 from the city of Taganrog. In Taganrog he had worked as chief engineer on an unknown construction project. He had a wife and daughter at home in the USSR. Since he was a civil engineer by profession, he presumably had had advanced engineering education. While in Leipzig, he gave courses on Party history to Russian civilians.
8. The German employees were also not very satisfactory; in fact, they sabotaged the canal construction by slow-down methods and by carelessly, or purposely, breaking the machinery. The morale of the Germans was low, because they disliked being bossed by Russian officers. Safety precautions were also lacking; in addition, serious shortages of all types of material and the use of obsolete machinery handicapped the construction. The shortages were largely in steel, machinery, tools, and electric appliances.
- 25X1 9. Since the canal was to be navigable by barges of up to one thousand tons displacement, the main work done on the canal [] was dredging. Machinery for dredging consisted of the following: 25X1
- a. Thirty, ~~one~~-bucket excavators /a German excavator similar to the excavator shown in figure 1, page 81 of Dept of Army Pamphlet 30-5-1, Vol V, Engineer equipment, called "Ekskavator TE-2"/.
 - b. Three, to six multiple-bucket excavators.
 - c. Three hundred trucks with a one cubic m capacity.

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- d. Fifty trucks with a two cubic m capacity.
- e. An unknown number of cement mixers of various capacities (100 to 500 liter per hour).
- f. Mobile air compressors.²
- g. Eleven centrifugal electrical pumps.
- h. About three mobile electrical stations with a capacity of up to 24 kw.
- i. There was also other equipment [redacted]

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10. The following material was used in building the canal ([redacted])

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- a. Sheet and profile steel
- b. Lumber - mainly [redacted] tongue and groove manufactured by RMM and to be used as abutments in the canal
- c. Cement
- d. Petroleum
- e. Oil
- f. Lubricants
- g. Various materials, such as electrical fittings, glass, gravel, brick, etc.

11. All equipment used on the construction of the canal was the property of ISU #23. All material used for construction of the canal was bought by Colonel Rakov, AA Chief of the Technical Material Supply of ISU #23. Most of this material came from the German Trade Central (Deutsche Handels Zentrale - DHZ) in Leipzig and Berlin; the balance came from various other German firms. For instance, in January 1952, about 200 cubic m of wooden slots (tongues and grooves), each 16 x 18 cm and eight to nine m long, were needed for pilings in the canal. One thousand cubic m were delivered in finished form by various German firms and one thousand cubic m were sawed by the Mechanical Repair Shops of ISU #23 in Leipzig. The lumber for the slots was delivered in small quantities from various German firms and was of a very poor quality. Of one thousand cubic m of lumber about 200 cubic m could not be used because of the flaws. The Leipzig and Berlin branches of the DHZ firm delivered the steel, and the cement was delivered by unidentified German firms. No materials for the construction of the canal came from the USSR. The Mechanical Repair Shops also did some of the work on the canal. It manufactured wooden tongues and grooves used for the abutments in the canal, and performed major, medium and minor repair on vehicles, equipment and machinery used on canal construction. Work which it could not handle was subcontracted to German firms.
12. Most of the machinery used in building the canal was of German manufacture. There was however, some US Equipment used such as Ford gas compressors and electric motors. ZIS-5 trucks² were the only Russian equipment used.

1. Washington Comment. [redacted]

2. [redacted] Comment. Number not known to source.

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